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AUTHOR	Bauernschub, Mary Beth
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ABSTRACT

In this lesson for implementation in Grade 3, students will explore the pioneers' and settlers' ways of life through drama and songs. Crossing the prairie, living in a sod house, and the growth of Abilene, Kansas, will be explored in the lesson using drama games, role playing, written text, and songs. The lesson offers an overview; suggests length and grade level; lists subjects and subtopics; cites dimensions of learning and intelligences being addressed; notes materials needed; and points out related textbooks and teacher resources. It also discusses relevant National Standards for Arts Education and other standards. The lesson then provides instructional objectives; strategies; a detailed, step-by-step instructional plan; and assessment and extension activities. (NKA)

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Curricula, Lessons and Activities

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The Way West: A Duet of Plays

Resource Type: lesson

Length: 3 days

Grade: 3

Subjects: Language Arts, Performing Arts, Social Studies

Subtopics: History, Literature, Stagecraft, Theater

Intelligences Being Addressed:
- Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence
- Interpersonal Intelligence
- Intrapersonal Intelligence
- Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence
- Visual/Spatial Intelligence

Dimensions of Learning:
- Acquisition and integration of knowledge
- Extension and refinement of knowledge
- Meaningful use of knowledge
- Productive habits of the mind

Overview: Students will explore the pioneers' and settlers' ways of life through drama and songs. Crossing the prairie, living in a sod house, and the growth of Abilene, Kansas, will be explored using drama games, role playing, written text, and songs.

CS 511 368

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Equipment:

- Computer Mac or PC with Internet access

Media & Materials:

Printouts: This lesson does not have any printouts.

Student Supplies:

Other Materials:

- graph paper
- journal
- pencil
- shoe box for diorama

Related Textbooks:

Lewis and Papa—Adventure on the Santa Fe Trail; by Barbara Joose; Jon Van Zyle; Chronicle Books; 1998.

Wagon Wheels; by Barbara Brenner; Harper and Row, 1984.

I Have Heard of a Land; by Joyce Carol Thomas and Floyd Cooper (illustrator); Joanna Colter Books, Harper Collins Publishers, 1998.

"An Early Prairie Town" in *From Sea to Shining Sea*; by Beverly J. Armento, J. Jorge Klor de Alva, Gary B. Nash, Christopher L. Salter, Louis E. Wilson, and Karen K. Wixson; Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

Teacher Internet Resources:

Lesson and Extension Specific Resources:

- **Abilene, Kansas: History**
  http://www.ukans.edu/heritage/abilene/history.htm

  This site informs about the history of Abilene, Kansas, including information about the Chisholm Cattle Trail, Kansas Pacific Railroad, the Smoky Hill Trail, Tom Smith, and Wild Bill Hickok. Current information about Abilene is also available.

- **End of the Oregon Trail: Covered Wagons**
  http://www.endoftheoregontrail.org/wagons.html

  On this site, you will find a labeled, detailed sketch of the covered wagon (Prairie

Schooner), as well as information about its history and use.

- **The Oregon Trail**
  http://www.isu.edu/~trinmich/Oregontrail.html

  Explore and learn about the history of the Oregon Trail. This site includes a map of the trail, historic sites along the trail, facts about the journey, personal diaries, memoirs, period books, and an online store full of Oregon Trail merchandise.

General Internet Resources:

- **The American West**
  http://www.americanwest.com/

  This site discusses the development of the American West, from the Frontier and Pioneer days of the Wild West to the West of today. Find links on westward expansion and trails, America's freedom documents, Native Americans, pioneers, and more!

- **The North American Prairies**
  http://www.runet.edu/~swoodwar/CLASSES/GEOG235/biomes/tempgrass/prairie.html

  This site contains a map and descriptions of the mixed, tall grass, and short grass prairies of the United States.

National Standards for Arts Education:

- K-4 Theatre Content Standard 1 : Script writing by planning and recording improvisations based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history
- K-4 Theatre Content Standard 2 : Acting by assuming roles and interacting in improvisations
- K-4 Theatre Content Standard 3 : Designing by visualizing and arranging environments for classroom dramatizations
- K-4 Theatre Content Standard 4 : Directing by planning classroom dramatizations
- K-4 Theatre Content Standard 5 : Researching by finding information to support classroom dramatizations

Click here for additional information on the National Standards for Arts Education

Other National Standards:

- History #1, #2, #3, #4; Historical Understanding #1

Source of Standards: McRel

For more on the Standards in other subjects, please refer to the Mid-continent Regional Education Laboratory (McREL) website.

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State Standards, if any:

To search the State Arts Standards, please visit the National Conference of State Legislatures website.

Instructional Objectives: Students will be able to complete the following:

Social Studies: Peoples of the Nation and World

- Identify reasons pioneers moved to the West.
- Identify those qualities of the United States that promote the movement of immigrants to the U.S. as part of the continuing history of the nation by identifying the risk of new and controversial ideas in opening new opportunities for many.
- Identify examples of human adaptation.

Social Studies: Valuing Self and Others

- Demonstrate a positive self-concept by behaving appropriately in a variety of situations by displaying self-respect and confidence and by developing good listening skills.
- Recognize that people everywhere have similar social needs, motivations, and desires but may express them differently by expressing one's own views and by accepting others' points of views.

Social Studies: Political Systems

- Read and interpret fiction and non-fiction passages about people, places, and events in the early history of U.S. political systems describing the immigrants who came to America and their reasons for immigration.

Social Studies: Economics

- Identify reasons for the growth of prairie towns.
- Explain why Abilene, Kansas, grew into a busy trade center.
- List reasons for Abilene's decline as a cattle town.
- Discuss how wants and needs are met over time.

Strategies:

- Direct instruction
- Cooperative learning
- Silent Reading
- Group process
- Hands-on project
- Guided discovery

Instructional Plan:

WARM UP

1. Read *Lewis and Papa* by Barbara Joose.

2. Students listen for and note essential items that could be packed in a covered wagon.

INTRODUCTORY AND DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES:

1. Play the drama game, "Packed My Suitcase." Change the name to "Packed My Wagon." The things to be packed must be historically accurate.

2. To play:

a. All players sit in a circle.
b. First person says "I'm going to pack my wagon for my trip West. I'm putting in _____."
c. As the speaker tells what he/she will take, the speaker makes an action appropriate to the word. All students copy the action.
d. The person next to him/her now repeats what was just said and the action. Then he/she adds a new item and action.
e. The game is complete when all the players in the circle have added something new to go into the wagon.

GUIDED PRACTICE ACTIVITIES:

1. Draw the outline of a covered wagon on a piece of paper and copy one for each student.
2. Students recall the information from "Packed My Wagon" and put it inside the covered wagon outline.
3. Students circle five of the most necessary items (to them) on the list. They share these with the class. Tally and graph the results of the class.
4. Students or the teacher read either *Wagon Wheels* by Barbara Brenner or *I Have Heard of a Land* by Joyce Carol Thomas for background information on settlers in a sod house on the prairie. Both of the stories are based on fact and involve main characters who are African Americans.

INDEPENDENT ACTIVITIES:

1. Students read "An Early Prairie Town" on pages 154-157 in *From Sea to Shining Sea*.
2. Answer all review questions on page 157.
3. From the collection, *Plays of the Old West, Volume One: Grades K-3*, by L.E. McCullough, have copies made of "Git Along Little Dogies" on pages 43-52 (about a cattle drive through Abilene, Kansas) and "The Little Sod Shanty" on pages 91-105 (about life on the prairies in a sod house). Both plays include traditional folk songs and stage designs and directions.
4. Divide the class into two groups and assign a play to each group.
5. Decide if the students will be performing the pieces: as full plays, with costumes, props, and scenery; as Readers Theater, where students just read to the audience and one student reads the stage directions; or a radio play to be recorded on tape

that can be played again.

6. Make a set design plan of a part of the play he/she is in.
7. Transfer the plan's idea to make a diorama of it in a shoe box.
8. On the back of the shoebox, write an explanation of why this piece has been chosen by the student to represent in the diorama.
9. Allow several days for practice and designs to be completed.

Assessment:

1. The review questions on page 157 are corrected.
2. The plays are presented in the selected way. The participation and cooperation of each member of the cast and crew will be evaluated.
3. Devise a checklist or rubric for the set design and diorama. Historical and environmental elements should be part of the evaluation.

Extensions: Have students explain and display the set dioramas. Students sing the songs in the plays.

Teacher References: *Plays of the Wild West, Volume One: Grades K-3*; by L.E. McCullough; A Smith and Kraus Book, 1997.

Author : Mary Beth Bauernschub
Kingsford Elementary School
Mitchellville MD

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